

Battle of Top Allegheny

Dec. 13, 1861.

The battle of Top Allegheny was fought in Pocahontas county on December 13, 1861 between the forces of the Union under General R. H. Milroy, and the forces of the confederates under General W. W. Loring. Col. Edward Johnson commanding.

The two companies had camped within sight of each other since July 13, 1861 the day the Federals had occupied Whites Top of Cheat. For five months they had watched each others camp fires rise. During this five months they had fought the battle at Travelers Repose on Oct. 3 and had also had another skermish at this same place on Oct. 31, 1861. Both times the Federals had been driven back to their camp on Cheat Mountain.

There had been other minor skermishes throughout the summer and Autumn. The Federal camp was known officially as Camp Cheat Mountain Summit. The Confederate camp was known as Camp Baldwin, in honor of a confederate soldier of that name. Between these two camps was Camp Bartow at Travelers Repose. The Confederates had made a winter camp on top Allegheny Montain by erecting log cabins.

As you go along the road now you can see piles of stone at regular intervals which represent the chimneys of the cabins. You can see the trenches and fortifications on Allegheny also at Cheat and Bartow. The top of Allegheny is a wind-swept pasture land, and the pike lies for some miles through this level table-land. In making the attack, the Federals had to climb up the side of the mountain and fight on the top of this table-land.

The advance on December 12th found Camp Bartow at Travelers Repose deserted, but Mayor D. H. Boss of the 52nd Virginian had been dispatched to that point with 106 men to form an ambuscade on the road between Turtin and Bartow.

CIVIL WAR

The Confederate line swung back and forward, and at one stage of the battle their right flank was driven to take shelter in their log cabins. There was fighting all over the top until mid afternoon, The half of the army which had swung to the south and was advancing up the crest of Buffalo Ridge failed in its purpose of surprising the camp. On that side of the camp there were trenches prepared to guard both roads and there was also some good artillery.

These trenches were full of soldiers prepared for an emergency. However, when the Federals first appeared, Captain Anderson of the Lee Battery thought it was a band of pickets being driven in. He sprang upon the side of the trench and called to them to hurry up and get in to the trenches. He was instantly shot and killed.

Finally about mid afternoon a retreat was sounded and the Federal army made its way back to camp Cheat Mountain. The Confederates reported that 1,200 Confederates had repulsed an army of 5000 men. That it was a great battle and a great victory.

The Federals reported that they had 1,760 men and the Confederates had 2,500, and that it was a reconnaissance in force. J. P. Benjamin, Sec. of War, wrote that President Jefferson Davis having been informed of the valor of Col. Edward Johnson in repulsing a vastly superior force was much gratified at the news of success, and had made him a brigadier general.

The losses of the battle were: Federal-dead 20, wounded 107, missing 10, total 137.

Confederate- dead 20, wounded 98, missing 28, total 146. After this battle the troops went into winter quarters, and there was no more fighting on the Staunton and Parkersburg turnpike that winter.

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By, Andrew Price.

According to the old timers who have heard relatives tell about their winter in camp on the Allegheny, they were about to starve.

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Boy McFaters says he has heard his uncle J. Martin tell how they went out once and killed a sheep belonging to a near by farmer. That they were so hungry that they ate it when only half cooked and then fought over the skin. At another time they broke into a cellar where a woman had her ox hid. They cut its throat and took the meat back to camp.

Ambrose Bierce tells of hunting bear on Cheat Mountain when the snow was up to his arms. Whether he hunted for pleasure or to obtain food I do not know. Also I've been told by Lee Ervin, who had several uncles from Bath Co. in Camp Baldwin, that the reason they were so well prepared to repulse this Federal army was because they could see them as they marched down Back Allegheny and knew they were coming for an attack. Therefore, had all in readiness.